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Latin American Trends

STAFF NOTES

Declassified and
Approved for Release
July 2000

~~Secret~~

December 6, 1976

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~~SECRET~~Chile: Progress on Human Rights

Our judgment that the Chilean government has achieved a substantial breakthrough on the human rights front by its release of political prisoners is being reaffirmed by the evidence collected by some of the junta's most persistent critics. 150

actions to empty the prisons have gone a long way toward resolving the controversy over political prisoners.

there has been a sharp decline in the number of prisoners held by the government. most of those being tried or serving sentences are actually out on bail, on parole, or under house arrest. The government is taking steps to commute the sentences of many persons already convicted; some 1,110 have been granted permission to go into exile and about 800 of these have already left the country.

Despite allegations by local communists and Radio Moscow that many persons recently freed have been rearrested and that unidentified bodies have appeared in the Santiago morgue, there have been no new instances of illegal detention or disappearances. Although there are still pending cases of unsolved disappearances, security forces do not appear to be engaged in the kinds of human

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rights violations that earlier aroused international condemnation.

Adding to signs of a more liberal trend is [REDACTED] that local military zone commanders are reducing sentences under the discretionary powers authorized by the state of siege. One regional commander [REDACTED] that the number of persons detained in his province had diminished from 165 to 2 within the past year.

[REDACTED] further moves to "normalize" Chile will be taken as conditions warrant. It is very possible that President Pinochet is getting--and heeding--advice to ease up on the tough security restrictions in force since the coup. Members of the newly formed Council of State may be instrumental in this respect. Moreover, there is some information to suggest that the influence of hardliners in the government has decreased and that Pinochet now thinks a new approach is justified by domestic tranquility and the high cost of Chile's international isolation. [REDACTED] 1.50

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